



**THE
RETIRED ENLISTED
ASSOCIATION**

Serving The Total Force

TESTIMONY OF
NATIONAL MILITARY/VETERANS ALLIANCE (NMVA)
BEFORE THE
THE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MAY 24, 2001
PRESENTED BY
MARK H. OLANOFF, Command Chief Master Sergeant, USAF (Ret)
CO-DIRECTOR, NMVA
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, THE RETIRED ENLISTED ASSOCIATION

DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL GRANTS OR CONTRACTS

The Retired Enlisted Association does not currently receive, has not received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous years any federal money for grants or contracts.

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BIOGRAPHY OF COMMAND CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT MARK H. OLANOFF, TREA NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR; CO-DIRECTOR, NATIONAL MILITARY VETERANS ALLIANCE

Command CMSgt Mark H. Olanoff enlisted in the U.S. Air Force on September 27, 1967 after graduating from Darby Township High School in Glenolden, Pa. After completion of basic military training and technical training he was assigned to Osan AB, Korea in 1968 working in the military personnel division. Chief Olanoff served in numerous military personnel assignments at Othello AFS, Washington; RAF Bentwaters, England and Griffiss AFB, NY. He was discharged from the U.S. Air Force on July 30, 1976 and joined the New Jersey Air National Guard in Atlantic City, New Jersey serving in positions of Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC), Customer Assistance; NCOIC, Consolidated Base Personnel Office and Chief, Personnel Systems Management. Chief Olanoff transferred to the Air Force Reserve at Dover AFB, Delaware on June 19, 1989 serving as Chief, Personnel Systems Management until Feb 9, 1991. Chief Olanoff assumed the position of Chief, Personnel Systems Management for the 436th Airlift Wing (as a federal civil servant) from Feb 10, 1992 until May 22, 1993.

On April 1, 1992, Chief Olanoff assumed the position as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Commander of the 512th Airlift Wing, Dover AFB, DE. In this position, Chief Olanoff served as the Commander's representative on all enlisted issues. During his tenure in this position, Chief Olanoff was TDY to the Persian Gulf. He served in this position until his retirement from the Air Force Reserve on June 10, 1996.

On April 1, 1996, Chief Olanoff assumed the position of Veterans Service Officer for the State of Delaware assisting Veterans with Veterans Affairs (VA) claims and representing the Commission of Veterans' Affairs at many meetings and functions. He was appointed to the VA Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 4 Management Advisory Committee, which includes the areas of Pennsylvania, Delaware, parts of South New Jersey and parts of West Virginia.

Chief Olanoff assumed his current position as National Legislative Director for The Retired Enlisted Association on December 16, 1996. He serves as Co-Director of the National Military Veterans Alliance, which represents 26 military and veterans' organizations. He also serves as Co-Chair of the Retirement and Veterans Affairs Committees for The Military Coalition (TMC). He also serves as a member of the Guard and Reserve Committee of TMC and as a member of the Legislative Affairs Committee for the Alexandria, Virginia Chamber of Commerce. Further, he serves as Chair of the Federal Subcommittee, Government Relations and Public Affairs Council for the Greater Washington Society of Association Executives (GWSAE).

He holds an Associate in Applied Science from the Community College of the Air Force in Human Resource Management (April 1980) and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Stockton State College, Pomona, New Jersey (May 1986).

Chief Olanoff is a graduate of the 8th Air Force Leadership School at Barksdale AFB, LA and a distinguished graduate of the Air National Guard NCO Academy at the Professional Military Educational Center in Knoxville, Tennessee. Chief Olanoff's military awards include the Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the National Defense Service Medal with one service star and the Southwest Asia Service Medal with one service star. Chief Olanoff has been awarded the Master Personnel Badge.

NMVA includes 26 military and veterans' organizations. These organizations represent over 3,500,000 members of the seven uniformed services, officer and enlisted, active duty, reserve, National Guard, retired and other veterans' plus their families and survivors:

Air Force Sergeants Association
American Military Retirees Association
American Military Society
American Retiree Association
American World War II Orphans Network
Catholic War Veterans
Class Act Group
Gold Star Wives of America
Korean War Veterans Foundation
Legion of Valor
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of the World Wars
National Association for Uniformed Services
National Gulf War Resource Center
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
Naval Reserve Association
Non Commissioned Officers Association
Society of Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces
Society of Military Widows
The Retired Enlisted Association
TREA Senior Citizens League
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors
Uniformed Services Disabled Retirees
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Women in Search of Equity

The National Military/Veterans Alliance would like to thank the new subcommittee Chairman, Rep. Hayworth, Ranking Member, Rep. Reyes and distinguished members of the House Veterans Affairs Benefits subcommittee for this opportunity to come before you to discuss HR 1291, the 21st Century Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act. Also, a personal note, I am a product of the Vietnam-era GI Bill and am honored to be testifying today.

HR 1291, 21st Century Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act

We commend the full committee Chairman, Rep. Smith for introducing this important legislation to increase the amount of educational benefits for veterans' effective fiscal year 2002. We also thank full committee Ranking Member, Rep. Evans and the other 84 co-sponsors of HR 1291 for their continued support. We note that over the three-year period, this legislation will increase benefits by more than 50 percent of the current amount of \$528 per month for those under Section 3015 (a), increasing to \$1,100 per month in fiscal year 2004 and from \$429 per month for those under Section 3015 (b), increasing to \$894 per month in fiscal 2004. NMVA strongly supports this increase. Although traditionally considered a transition benefit, the GI Bill is now considered a recruiting and retention tool. The military is now competing with major corporations to keep highly qualified and trained workers. By acting today to substantially increase GI Bill benefits, considerable progress can be made to compete with private employers and keep these highly trained workers in the military.

NMVA GI Bill Goals

We recommend the committee consider increasing the amount for those survivors under Section 3532, who currently receive \$485 per month for full-time. We also recommend that the committee consider indexing the GI Bill starting in fiscal year 2005, preserving the purchasing power of education, due to inflation and eliminating the requirement to pass new legislation. Also, NMVA recommends that the committee consider eliminating the time limits to complete education benefits. Today, education continues years after completion of initial educational goals. Further, we recommend the \$1200 MGIB enrollment fee be eliminated.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, the National Military/Veterans Alliance is pleased to be here today to participate in the discussion of enhancement of the GI Bill. Again, NMVA strongly supports HR 1291, the 21st Century Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act to substantially increase GI Bill payments to our service members and veterans. By increasing the total amount for tuition, this committee and Congress will have helped guarantee that the Armed Forces of the United States will continue to attract top quality personnel for recruits for today's military. Mr. Chairman, I am very proud to sit here today, as one who has benefited from the GI Bill and will always be grateful to the Congress who provided the benefit to my fellow comrades and me.